

THE GREATNESS OF THE GREAT COMMISSION

"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You. For the Kingdom is the Lord's and He rules over the nations." Psalm 22:27-28

The Great Commission is great! It contains:

- A great Truth - Jesus is Lord over **all areas** of life.
- A great Commission - we are to make disciples of **all nations**.
- A great Command - we are to teach obedience to **all things** that the Lord has commanded.
- And a great Promise - the Lord Himself promises to be with us for **all time**.

A careful reading of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) should make it clear that we are called to do far more than merely *"share the Gospel."*

Jesus Christ declared: **"All authority has been given to Me in Heaven and on Earth..."** The Lordship of Jesus Christ in every area of life must be proclaimed and practiced.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations..." We are not called to make converts, or *"decisions"*, but disciples. We are to make disciples, not only of individuals, we must start there, and of families, which is vital, we are not only to disciple congregations and communities. The Great Commission commands us to make disciples of nations - **all nations!**

"...Baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit..." complete submission to Almighty God is essential.

"...Teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you..." Education is an essential part of the Great Commission. We are not just to teach faith, or a selection of a few of our favourite things. We have been instructed by the Lord Jesus Christ to teach obedience to everything that He has commanded.

Our Greatest Priority

This Great Commission must be our supreme ambition. The last command of our Lord Jesus Christ ought to be our first concern.

"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes." Romans 1:16

We must never allow distractions, danger, disappointments or determined opposition to deter us from obeying Christ's Great Commission. Our purpose on earth is to **"Make disciples... teaching obedience..."** The life-blood of the Church is its evangelistic zeal. No matter what the situation, or how adverse the circumstances may seem to be, our Lord's Command is to: **"Preach the Word! Be ready in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and teaching."** 2 Timothy 4:2

We are commanded to: **"Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."** Mark 16:15; **"Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name to all nations..."** Luke 24:47; Jesus declared: **"As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."** John 20:21; Christ made it clear that we are to be **"witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."** Acts 1:8

When we consider the greatness of The Great Commission, that Christ is commanding us to follow His example, to be sent, even as He was sent, to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins to all nations, to be His witnesses to the very ends of the earth, to preach the Gospel to every person, to make disciples of the nations, teaching obedience to all things that He has commanded - we are overwhelmed! The task seems impossible. Which of us can possibly feel adequate to the incredible responsibility of discipling the nations?

The Promised Power

But every command of Christ comes with a promise. When the Lord commands us to go and make disciples of all nations, He reminds us that He has all authority in Heaven and on Earth, and He promises us: *"Lo, I am with you, even to the end of the age."* Matthew 28:18-20

When the Lord commanded us to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature He promised miraculous power: *"And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the Word through the accompanying signs."* Mark 16:20

When the Lord commanded *"That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name to all nations..."* He promised **"power from on high."** Luke 24:47-49

When the Lord commissioned His followers: *"As the Father has sent Me, I also send you"* He breathed on them and said: *"Receive the Holy Spirit."* John 20:21-22

And at the Ascension, when the Lord commanded His followers to be His witnesses *"To the ends of the earth"* He promised: **"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you."** Acts 1:8

Nothing that God has commanded us to do is impossible. As we read in the Book of Acts: The Lord went up! The Holy Spirit came down! The disciples went out! (Acts 1:8-8:1). A handful of disciples in an upper room went out and changed the world!

The greatest experience is to **come** to Jesus. The greatest task is to disciple the nations for Jesus. The greatest priority is to **go** for Jesus.

Changed lives - changing the lives of others. Forgiven sinners, sharing the way of Salvation to other sinners. Blessed Christians, seeking to bless others.

The first recorded words of Christ in His early ministry were: **"Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand...Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."** Matthew 4:17-19

Our Lord's call to repentance, to discipleship ("**Follow Me**") and to evangelism ("**And I will make you fishers of men**") are all inter-related. We are called to come to Him for Salvation and to go for Him to bring the message of Salvation to others.

Jesus is: *"The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* John 1:29

Jesus is: *"The Light of the world"* John 8:12.

Jesus is: *"The Way, the Truth and the Life. No-one comes to the Father except through Me."* John 14:6 There is no other way, no other religion, no other hope for mankind. *"Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in that My House may be filled."* Luke 14:23 **"Freely you have received, freely give."** Matthew 10:8

Jesus said: *"He who is not with Me is against Me, and He who does not gather with Me scatters abroad."* Matthew 12:30

You are either a missionary or a mission field. You cannot be neutral in missions. Walking by on the other side of the road is not an option for Christians.

"Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already ripe for harvest!" John 4:35

Jesus commanded us to look at the fields. We need to investigate and understand the missionary challenge.

How well do you know your World? Did you know that there are 12 000 ethno-linguistic people groups in the world? There are 66 nations which restrict religious freedom and persecute Christians. Over 400 million Christians live under governments which persecute believers. 21% of the world's population are Muslims, 13% of the world's population is Hindu.

Africa occupies 22% of the world's land surface. 41% of Africans are Muslims. 14 countries in Africa have less than 1% Evangelical Christians: Mauritania, Morocco, Libya, Tunisia, Comores, Djibouti, Niger, Senegal, Somalia, Algeria, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Mali. Over 100 million Christians in Africa do not yet possess a Bible.

"The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the Harvest to send out labourers into His harvest." Matthew 9:37-38

The Lord commanded us to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all Creation. This is a command, not only to go into all the geographical world, but into every level of society. We must go into the world of business and education, the judiciary, government, entertainment, economics, medicine, sports and the arts. We are to proclaim the Gospel of repentance and forgiveness of sins. We must deal with the primary issue of **sin**. People are not innocent victims needing deliverance, but guilty sinners needing forgiveness and mercy from Almighty God. *"As the Father has sent Me, so I am sending you."* As with Christ's incarnation we need to become one with, and identify with the people we are sent to. We need to live and speak the Gospel in their language and in their culture. *"The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the Kingdom, ..."* Matthew 13:38.

"You are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world..." Matthew 5:13-14

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven." Matthew 5:16

The best sermon illustration is the life of integrity of a Christian neighbour, colleague or family member. At Evangelism Workshops, Great Commission Conferences, and Biblical Worldview Seminars that I have conducted throughout Africa, Europe and the USA, I found that the vast majority of delegates surveyed came to Christ through personal evangelism, from friends, family and strangers in one-one-one witnessing and counselling. So far I have not come across anyone who reported being converted through Gospel music. Once, in a conference of 400 pastors and evangelists in Nigeria, I came across one individual who reported being converted through Gospel TV. Even in large groups of several hundred, I've seldom found more than 3% who could, along with myself, report being converted through an evangelistic crusade. There are normally a few dozen who report Gospel literature having been used of the Lord to bring them to repentance. However, at every evangelistic workshop and conference that I have surveyed, the vast majority report that it was through family, friends, neighbours, and even strangers, in one-on-one personal evangelism that they were converted.

Jesus said: *"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in Heaven. That whoever denies Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father who is in Heaven."* Matthew 10:32-33. We dare not let opportunities to witness for Christ pass us by.

"For whoever is ashamed of Me and My Words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's and of the holy angels." Luke 9:26. Do not be intimidated into silence, fear God and not man.

Jesus assured us: *"There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for My sake and the Gospel's, who shall not receive a hundred-fold now in this time - houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions - and in the age to come, eternal life."* Mark 10:29-30. Sacrifice is required.

"I must preach the Kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent." Luke 4:43. Don't bottleneck the Gospel. Reach out across boundaries.

"Let us cross over to the other side." Mark 4:35. Overcome all obstacles for the Gospel.

"On this rock I will build my Church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." Matthew 16:18 Victory is assured. The best form of defence is attack!

"The Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing and forceful men lay hold of it." Matthew 11:12. Be bold, innovative, and persistent in seeking first the Kingdom of God. Nothing is impossible, nothing is beyond the reach of prayer - except that which is beyond the will of God. No one is unreachable. The will of God will never lead you - where the grace of God cannot keep you.

"And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations and then the end will come." Matthew 24:14

"That at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in Heaven, and those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Philippians 2:10-11

"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Habakkuk 2:14

Is your church consistently praying for the fulfilment of The Great Commission throughout Africa? It is written: *"My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations"* Mark 11:17

"In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your Name. Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven..." Matthew 6:9-10. We need to pray for God's Will to be obeyed - not just in the Church - but in the world! You are not to be the salt of the church, but the salt of the earth, the Light of the World.

This is the Word of God: ***"Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it!"*** Luke 11:28

If you are serious about missions, and share our vision of winning Africa for Christ, contact Frontline Fellowship for the **Great Commission Course** audio CDs, or MP3, for the **Great Commission Manual** and for evangelistic resources that you can use to disciple the nations for Christ.

Give up your small ambitions and follow Jesus!

IF I GO NOT

***If I Go Not To Those Who Have Not Heard,
If I Withhold From Them God's Precious Word;
If Sin-Cursed Heathen Go To Christless Graves
Having Never Heard That Jesus Saves,
If By My Negligence Some Souls Are Lost,
Despite God's Mercy and Calvary's Untold Cost,
If I Care Not For Those In Distant Lands,
Shall Not Their Bloodguilt Be Upon My Hands?***

***If I Pray Not For Those Who Witness Bear,
If I No Intercessory Burden Bear;
If God's Dear Servants Never Are Upon My Heart,
And In Their Labours I Share No Part;
If By My Prayerlessness There Comes An Hour
When They Lack Wisdom, Grace, Strength Or Power,
And Captives Escape Not Sin's Strong Bands,
Shall Not Their Bloodguilt Be Upon My Hands!***

***If I Give Not, and By My Selfishness I Cause God's Work and Workers Sore Distress;
If My Poor Stingy Heart Hardened Be - To Needs Of Others, Their Necessity;
If By My Failure Some Shall Never Hear - The Message Of Salvation...
Then I Fear - Mine Is The Sin, and Justice Fair Demands -
That I Accept The Guilt Of Bloody Hands!***

(See Ezekiel 3:18-20; 33:2-9; 34:2-10; Matthew 25:34-46)

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This article has been adapted from a chapter in the [Great Commission Manual](#), available from **Christian Liberty Books**, PO Box 358, Howard Place 7450, Cape Town, South Africa, Tel: 021-689-7478, email: admin@christianlibertybooks.co.za and website: www.christianlibertybooks.co.za.

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See also: [The Greatest Century of Missions](#)